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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 TEGUCIGALPA 001954

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

PASS TO DS/IP/WHA, DS/CR/CIL, DS/IP/ITA, DS/FO/HUFO
STATE FOR S/CT, INL/LP, WHA/PPC, WHA/CEN, CA/FPP, AND
CA/OCS/ACS/WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [CPAS](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: A DISTURBING TREND OF U.S. CRIMINALS OBTAINING
HONDURAN PASSPORTS.

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (Added Sensitive caption,
relabelled pghs 8, 10; change in pass line.)

1. (SBU) Summary: In the month of September RSO and the Consular section's Anti-Fraud unit (AFU) have tracked two separate cases of U.S. felons/fugitives who have obtained a valid Honduran passport under fraudulent means. RSO is also aware of one other case where a Salvadoran gang member was involved in the rape of a minor in Houston, Texas procured a Honduran passport. RSO believes in these three cases alone that as many as six Honduran passports were fraudulently obtained. RSO has been working with Honduran Prosecutors and investigators to determine how these dangerous individuals obtained these documents. The Consul General has met with representatives of the MFA and the Ministry of Government and Justice to urge them to investigate the breakdowns in procedures that permitted the issuance of these passports to the U.S. felons. Honduran prosecutors are conducting their own investigations into the leads provided by RSO. end summary

THE THREE AMIGOS

2. (SBU) In early September RSO Tegucigalpa was informed by Diplomatic Security agents in Houston that AmCit Andy Burwig was arrested entering Houston International Airport. Burwig was arrested on an outstanding Felony Arrest Warrant from Utah for multiple counts of forgery. While DHS agents conducted a search after arrest they discovered that Burwig had three Honduran passports in his possession. The Honduran passports appeared to be valid books. RSO and Consular AFU checks with Honduran authorities confirmed that the books were genuine Honduran passport books but that the information contained therein was fraudulent and that they had not been issued through the Honduran passport system. The first Honduran passport is listed in the name of Sergio Sanchez Bonelli. Passport number B144837, in doing a comparison RSO and DS Filed office in Houston, noticed the photo in this passport appears to match the photo on Burwig's U.S. passport application. Burwig has a valid U.S. passport, passport number 057273898. The second Honduran passport found was in the name of Hans Andres Schnidet Lopez, passport number B068121. DS Field office and RSO in doing a comparison observed that the photo in this passport appears to match the photo of U.S. passport application of Terry Lund, U.S. passport number 057825397. The third Honduran passport found was in the name of Max Alberto Kreigmann Rodriguez passport number B074458. In examining the Honduran passport photo, DS field office and RSO found an apparent match between Lopez and James Burns. US passport number 057706380. According to DSS Houston agents, Burns may in fact be in Honduras at this time. The Consul General has requested that the Honduran Central bank, which stores and tracks these books, provide information to shed light on the path these books followed from their warehouse to the felon's hand.

3. (SBU) In further investigation, RSO has determined that a disturbing trend in this case. All three individuals involved in this passport scam have criminal records. Burwig is currently in custody awaiting extradition back to Utah for his outstanding forgery charges. He will be charged in Federal court for 18 USC 1546 for possession of fraudulent documents, once his legal problems in Utah are settled. In conducting criminal record checks on all three subjects, RSO has determined that Lund and Burns have extensive criminal histories. Before his current legal troubles, Burwig had only been arrested one other time and spent three days in a Californian jail for disobeying a court order. In contrast to Burwig, Terry Lund has a criminal history that spans over 25 years. Lund has been arrested for various criminal acts ranging from fraud, theft, illegal possessions of a shotgun, possession of controlled substance with the intent to sell to issuing fraudulent checks. In March 1999 Lund pled guilty to fraud in connection with bankruptcy and money laundering and received 33 months in prison and 36 months of supervised release.

4. (SBU) Another concern RSO has in relation to Lund, it appears that he has not left the U.S. in the last couple of

years. DSS agents in Houston confirmed that he was in prison and has been on State Parole in Utah for the last couple of years, making it difficult for him to travel to Honduras to obtain a Honduran passport. RSO believes that Andy Burwig obtained this travel document for him. In the case of James Burns, RSO has determined that he is a convicted felon whose criminal history spans the last ten years. In February 1997, Burns was convicted of wire and communication fraud and was sentenced to one to 15 years in jail. RSO was informed by DSS Houston agents that Burns has been in communication with them via cell phone and e-mail. Burns has stated that he wants to cooperate with authorities in this investigation. DSS Houston agents has informed Burns that he can walk into the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa and make a statement to the RSO. At this time Burns has failed to comply. Burns did state to DSS Houston agents that he was lured to Honduras by Burwig and another accomplice named Abdiel Rivera, who promised him a job. Burns related to agents that he submitted his photo believing that he was receiving a Honduran work permit. Burns also told agents that Burwig and Rivera have a home in an upper class section of Tegucigalpa and they engage in criminal activity in this home to include sex with underage Honduran females. RSO, in coordination with DSS Houston, believe that Abdiel Rivera is a former doctor convicted in 1993 of narcotics distribution. He was sentenced to 78 months to federal prison in Utah. RSO will continue to investigate these allegations made by Burns.

15. (SBU) It appears that all four of these men are connected by prison system and the state of Utah. Burwig has lived in Utah and Burns told investigators that he was a cell mate of Terry Lund and that Lund introduced him to Burwig and Rivera. Rivera also did time in a Utah prison. RSO is working with local prosecutors and law enforcement authorities to try and develop various investigative leads. Local authorities believe that all three passports were purchased in the San Pedro Sula area. In examining the national identification numbers used on the passports, two are fraudulent. The bio data used on the passports is written in and not electronically inscribed. Honduran prosecutors have told RSO that the passports are not maintained properly and that corruption and fraud is still prevalent within Honduran immigration, despite the recent shakeup and scandal, that now has control over the Honduran passport. GOH law enforcement authorities will continue to investigate.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

16. (SBU) In March 2004, Embassy Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents, received a lead that two fugitives from U.S. justice, Teddy Lee French and his son Christopher French were hiding in Honduras. Both were wanted in the State of Arkansas for narcotics trafficking, involving a methamphetamine lab. DEA, in working with Honduran law enforcement agencies, had Teddy Lee and Christopher French arrested and then voluntarily returned to the U.S. to face their outstanding charges. In the course of the investigation DEA discovered that the entire French family had or were in the process of obtaining Honduran identity documents to include a national identity card (cedula) birth certificates, and passports. During his brief detention and questioning by GOH law enforcement, Teddy Lee French, claimed that his true name was Fernando Guardado Guardado born in Omoa Honduras. Once confronted with the fact that his Honduran documents were fraudulently obtained and that his wife confirmed this, Teddy Lee confessed to his true identity and explained how he was able to obtain said documents.

17. (SBU) Teddy Lee French told investigators that a passport facilitator named Sardy Javier Reyes Rodriguez, located in Omoa, offered to provide the whole French family with Honduran identity documents to include passports. French stated that Rodriguez charged him USD 125,000 for the whole family. French stated that he traveled to Omoa to obtain a Honduran birth certificate, and to San Pedro Sula for a Honduran driver's license, and to be processed for a Honduran passport. French stated that his wife Karen went through the same process. Teddy Lee obtained a Honduran passport in the name of Fernando Guardado Guardado, passport number B046138, and a cedula number 0503-2004-00116. His wife, Karen French received a Honduran passport in the name of Ana Maria Gonzalez Ayala, passport number B046450, and a cedula number 0503-2004-00117. At the time of their detention, Teddy Lee's son Christopher and his wife Amamda French were also in the process of obtaining Honduran passports. During the investigation, Honduran investigators found Honduran government applications and other documents that pending their completion, would have given Christopher and Amamda French new identities. Christopher French would have been known as Christopher Charles Guardado Gonzalez and Amada would have been Amanda Maria Gonzalez Ayala. However, the long arm of the law apprehended them before the process could be completed.

18. (SBU) RSO has provided this information to GOH prosecutors and investigators. On September 16, GOH investigators conducted an inspection of the National Registry for Person office (RNP) in Omoa. (The RNP is where Honduran nationals obtain their cedula.) The Honduran investigators found the application for the Teddy Lee and Karen French. They also found other irregularities that will require more investigation. GOH investigators acknowledge that there is serious problems in the Omoa office. GOH investigators have indicated to RSO that the whole procedure for acquiring passports and cedula is for sale to the highest bidder. One facet of this investigation that RSO is most troubled by, is the French family were able to procure these official documents in less than a month. This is not an organized narcotics or terrorist group, just a fugitive family on the run.

EVIL IS AS EVIL DOES

19. (SBU) In August 2005, Houston Police officers (HPD) assigned to gang enforcement arrested a Latino gang member for having sex with a female minor. Upon further investigation, HPD officers learned that the person in custody had a Honduran passport and identity card in his possession bearing the name of Rudi Renan Amador Martinez, Honduran passport number B155320. HPD officers discovered that Martinez was really an El Salvadoran gang member named Francis Funes. During the initial investigation and in consultation with DSS Houston agents, and Consular section's AFU, RSO believes that Funes obtained his Honduran passport at the Honduran Consulate in Houston. On August 26, the AFU and Consul General confronted representatives of the MFA and passport-issuing agency with evidence from their own databases that showed the system had been corrupted. Post continues to press for an explanation of this failure. RSO informed GOH prosecutors. GOH prosecutors expressed concern that Funes acquired this passport under fraudulent means. GOH prosecutors stated that the Honduran Consul General in Houston is not a trustworthy person and that they suspect that most Honduran consuls posted in the U.S. are susceptible to bribes and fraud. DSS Houston agents have filed passport fraud charges against Funes and he is currently incarcerated in a Houston penal facility for the aforementioned Texas charges.

CONCERNS FOR US NATIONAL SECURITY

10. (SBU) Recently, the Embassy Tegucigalpa in conjunction with International Narcotics and Law Enforcement affairs (INL) had spent over USD 400,000 on a machine readable passport project with the GOH. As the previous cases illustrate regardless of security of the documents itself, what is key is the personnel who are responsible for the accountability of the documents. The persons involved in these cases are all criminals, though possibly dangerous, not overly sophisticated or organized. The disturbing part is that all managed to procure a Honduran passport with relative ease. One of the individuals, Terry Lund, did not even have to leave the confines of Utah to do so. GOH law enforcement officials have expressed legitimate concern that Honduran identity documents lack any accountability controls to stop the illegal use by criminals. Despite the current Honduran immigration scandal, and the intervention that Post hoped would to stop such action, and constant denials by GOH cabinet officials, it appears that a Honduran passport is still easily obtained for the right price. At this time RSO has no evidence that dangerous, sophisticated, organized crimes groups, such as Colombian drug cartels, Russian organized crime for example, or extremist terrorists groups have obtained, utilized or traveled with Honduran passports. However, Post fears that, if any of these dangerous organizations wanted to they could acquire said documents and there would be no way in deterring or stopping such action. If this were to happen now or in the future the consequences for the U.S. could be grave. RSO and the Consular section's AFU will continue to track all investigative leads. RSO also requests that all DSS field offices in the U.S. check all criminal cases to determine if any suspects were carrying, traveling with or had obtained a Honduran passport. This will assist RSO in gauging how widespread the problem is.

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